However, the facility for delivery of goods is available at all stations/ sidings open for booking of goods.

(c) Total earnings from goods traffic in Indian Railways during April 1986 to January, 1988 were about Rs. 10,082 crores. The figures of February, 1988 are not yet available.

Posts Lying Vacant in the Ministry of Railways

2917. DR. MOHD. HASHIM KIDWAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of posts lying vacant in the various departments of the Ministry of Railways during the last three years;

(b) what are the reasons for the delay in filling up these posts; and

(c) by when these posts are likely to be filled up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) to (c) The vacancy position in the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) changes from time to time. The number of posts lying vacant at the end of each of the last three years was as under:—

31.3.1985—153

31.3.1986—110

31.3.1987— 65

These vacancies were for short duration and the reason for delay in filling these posts was due to non-availability of candidates nominated by the various recruiting agencies such as Union Public Service Commission, Staff Selection Commission, etc. Filling up of posts is a continuous process and efforts are made to fill them up as quickly as possible. No vacancies are carried from year to year. The period for which said posts inevitably lie vacant is generally a few months.

Licences to Coolies/Porters

2918. SHRI RAMSINGBHAI PATALIYABHAI RATHVAKOLI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Railways have issued licences to Railway Coolies/Porters on various stations of Delhi and various divisions of Railways throughout the country;

(b) if so, what are the details of the licences issued on each station during the last three years;

(c) what is the number of licenced porters/coolies existing at present on each station as on 28th February, 1988;

(d) what are the Rules, Regulations, Policy, Norms and Guidelines for the issue of such licences; and

(e) what protection and assistance are being given to such licenced porters/coolies and their Unions, Associations and Federation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) to (e) The information is being collected from the Zonal Railways and the same will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Demonstration by Coolies/Porters

2919. SHRI RAMSINGBHAI PATALIYABHAI RATHVAKOLI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Railway coolies/porters have demonstrated in Delhi on 9th March, 1988 with their demands;

(b) whether it is a fact that some officials of the Railway Board had met the representatives of the porters on 9th March, 1988 and discussed with them in the matter; and

(c) if so, what are the names and status of the deputationists and the other details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A memorandum was received on behalf of the Minister of State (Railways). There was, however, no discussion.

(c) The delegation was led by Shri Sanwal Dass Gupta, President, Delhi Railway Licensed Porters Union. The details of the demands include treating the licensed porters as class IV employees of the Railways, revocation of licences of retrenched porters, provision of rest shelters, issue of two sets of Railway passes annually, provision of residential accommodation and certain other matters.

Bridges on Railways

2920. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of bridges in Indian Railways;

(b) what is the number of them that are identified as distressed bridges and what steps Government propose to make them safe;

(c) what is the number of them that are over hundred years old; and

(d) what is the number of them that have expired their life and what steps Government propose to make them safe?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) 1,14,260 (as on 1st April, 1987).

(b) As on 1st September, 1987, there were 1232 distressed bridges on Indian Railways.

The identification and rehabilitation of distressed bridges is a continuing process. Such bridges are kept under close watch and speed restriction imposed over them, if necessary, till the rehabilitation work is completed.

(c) Approximately 25,000.

(d) Bridges do not have a definite life span. Strengthening and rebuilding of old bridges is done on a programmed basis, depending on their condition. Besides, bridge superstructures, i.e. girders, slabs etc. are also replaced on strength consideration wherever so found necessary for introduction of heavier loads. All the Railway bridges are inspected annually and remedial action taken, wherever found necessary.

Boeing Service to Vijayawada

2921. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that at present there is no boeing service to Vijayawada;

(b) whether it is also a fact that air passengers intending to visit Vijayawada have to wait for a number of days before they can get their air reservations;

(c) whether Government would consider the desirability of introducing a boeing service to Vijayawada; and

(d) if so, by when it is likely to be introduced and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI MOTI LAL VORA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Introduction of B-737 service to Vijayawada would depend upon upgradation of the airport at Vijayawada to accept jet aircraft and subject to availability of Boeing aircraft capacity at that point.

Deterioration in Marbles of Taj Mahal

2922. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state: